



Planning Commission
Work Session Summary
June 9, 2010
City Hall, Conference Room
Fredericksburg, Virginia

Members Present

Edward F. Whelan, Chair
Roy F. Gratz
Vincent C. Ramoneda
Ricardo Rigual
Berkley Mitchell
Susan Spears

Members Absent

Roy McAfee

Staff

Ray Ocel
Erik Nelson
Dave King

Guests

Ron Hughes (VDGIF)

Mr. Ocel opened the work session at 5:00 p.m. and explained that its purpose was to allow staff to brief the Planning Commission on a draft watershed property management plan for the City's riparian property that has been placed in a conservation easement.

STAFF REVIEW

Mr. Nelson presented power point slides that reviewed the overall plan development process, including the high level of public participation. He noted that Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) had obtained a planning grant in 2008 to develop a plan for administering the City's easement property. During 2009 and early 2010, a committee of the easement holders, City staff, and FOR engaged in the necessary research and discussion to put together a document. Public meetings held in March 2009 and February 2010 were well attended and informed the process. FOR presented the draft plan to City Council in May 2010 and the Council immediately referred it to the Planning Commission, for their review and recommendation.

Mr. Nelson also presented the contents of the draft plan, which consists of an in-depth description of the watershed property's natural conditions, a review of the various activities that occur on the property, and management concepts for maintaining the integrity of the natural resource when various allowed activities continue. He explained the types of conflicts that had come up in discussion and in public meetings and how they had been resolved. He noted how some sections of the riparian property can be kept more secluded than other sections, even as additional access is developed at Hunting Run and possibly near the Phelps Wildlife Management Area.

Upon request, Mr. King reviewed the City's success in enforcing the prohibition of All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) on the property. Over the years, ATVs have damaged vegetation and caused

significant erosion. He noted that conditions are better, but continued efforts is needed to continue to control this problem.

Mr. Nelson explained that trapping had been prohibited on the City's upriver property since 1991, but that some of the public comment received during plan development asked the City to reconsider this exclusion. Mr. Hughes (VDGIF) briefed the Commission on how trapping occurs in the Commonwealth and how it is regulated through his agency. Mr. Nelson stated that this issue would need to be discussed further.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Mr. Rigual noted that the management section needed additional details on the various users and also needed to be more specific as to how each use would be considered. As written, the draft does not make clear the extent of the City's future involvement in developing infrastructure and regulating uses.

Mr. Gratz said that the plan should be clearer as to what properties outside the easement might be suitable for acquisition. Mr. King explained that several properties not contiguous to the easement properties had been excluded from the easement, so the City would have the flexibility to trade or sell them, when pursuing acquisition of properties on the river that would contribute to overall water quality protection.

NEXT STEPS

Mr. Ocel asked the Commissioners to submit any additional comments on the draft plan within the next few weeks. The staff will compile the comments and reconvene the plan committee to review and incorporate them. An updated draft will then be delivered to the Planning Commission for their continued review.

Meeting ended at 6:35 p.m.